

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 SCCT-01

OC-05 CCO-00 ACDA-05 ACDE-00 AID-05 OMB-01 SAM-01

SAB-01 SSM-03 PER-01 /105 W
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O R 161440Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8187

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICDURLANT NORFOLK VA

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DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0542

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: NO LETUP IN FIGHTING; FRANGIE-ASAD SUMMIT STILL ON BUT
TIMING UNCERTAIN

REF: BEIRUT 0501 (1445Z)

1. SUMMARY: ATTACK BY LEBANESE MILITARY AIRCRAFT JAN 16
SOUTH OF DAMOUR (SEPTELS) HIGHLIGHTS DANGEROUS ESCALATION ON
THAT FRONT. EVEN APART FROM THAT INCIDENT, FIGHTING IN NEARLY
ALL BATTLE ZONES HAS BEEN SEVERE PAST 24 HOURS. SLIPPAGE IS
EVIDENT IN PROJECTED TIMING OF FRANGIE-ASAD SUMMIT, BUT
MEETING IS STILL ON AT LATEST WORD. FRANGIE NOW INSISTING
THAT EFFECTIVE START BE MADE TOWARD CEASEFIRE BEFORE HE
JOURNEYS TO SUMMIT. SYRIANS HAVE SENT HIKMAT CHIHABI TO
BEIRUT TO ASSIST CEASEFIRE EFFORT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AN AREA STRETCHING FROM DAMOUR TOWARD SOUTHN THROUGH
SUBURBS AND COMMERCIAL SECTOR, TO QUARANTINA AND NORTHERN
BEIRUT RIVER BRIDGES, HEAVY EXPLOSIONS WER CONTINUOUS AND
LOUD NIGHT JAN 15-16 AND AT TIMES SOUNDED LIKE THUNDER ROLLING
IN FROM SEA.

3. BESIEGED RIGHTIST BASTIONS OF DAMOUR AND JIYE HAVE BEEN
SUBJECT TO HEAVY BOMBARDMENT. PRESENTLY, ATTACKERS
APPEAR TO BE MAINLY SUNNIS OF COAST AND PALESTINIANS FROM
SIDON AND TYRE. PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT APPARENTLY GROW-
ING. ATTACK BY LEABNESE MILITARY AIRCRAFT (SEPTELS NOTAL)
CONFIRMS THIS FRONT IS CENE OF DANGEROUS ESCALATION. FACT
THAT MAIN BEIRUT ELECTRICITY GENERATING PLANT NEAR DAMOUR
ADDS TO SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION THERE.

4. IN BEIRUT, COMBINED LEFTIST PRESSURE ON BAB IDRIS,
COMMERCIAL CENTER AND HOTELS HAS NOT RELAXED. PHALANGIST
POSITIONS IN FSEACOAST PORTION FROM PORT TO HOTELS MAY BE
GROWING SOMEWHAT PRECARIOUS. MAIN POINTS OF ATTACK ARE
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ALLENBY AND FOCH STREETS WHICH INTERSECT ORT STREET IN
COMMERCIAL CENTER. AFTER BRIEF LULL THIS MORNING, SOUND
OF MORTARS AND ROCKETS CAN BE PLAINLY HEARD FROM EMBASSY ONCE
AGAIN. SO COULD UNKNOWN SNIPER OR SNIPERS IN
HOLIDAY INN WHO HAVE BEEN BUSY POTTING AWAY AT STREET NEXT TO
EMAASSY FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW.

5. FOLLOWING DAY OF HALF-HEARTED SHELLING, QUARANTINA-

BRIDGE FRONT EXPLODED EVENING JAN 15, WITH MORTAR SHELLS AND ROCKETS DROPPING LIKE HAIL ONTO BRIDGE APPROACHES, QUARANTINA AND RESIDENTIAL SECTIONS OF BOURJ HAMMOUD, ASHRAFIYEH AND NABAA FACING RIVER. RUMORED ARRIVAL OF PHALANGIST REINFORCEMENTS HAS MADE LITTLE NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCE UP TO NOW. BRIDGES STILL IMPRACTICABLE AS PHALANGE SUPPLY LINE, DUE TO JYZINSFIRING FROM LEFTISTS. IF PHALANGISTS DO PRESS ATTACK AGAINST QUARANTINA, AS SOME OBSERVERS EXPECT, IT NOT INCONCEIVABLES THAT FIGHT WOULD ENTER PORT ITSELF, WHICH HAS BEEN DAMAGED ALREADY. THIS WOULD ESPECIALLY BE CASE IF LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS SEND IN MORE TROOPS BY SEA TO QUARANTINA.

6. ELSEWHERE, IN THE BEKAA, HELLING HAS CONTINUED IN ZAHLE, BUT APPEARS TO BE CAUSING FEW CASUALTIES. NEARBY CHRISTIAN VILLAGE OF DEIR AL AHMAR STILL SUFFERING. FIGHTING IS ALSO REPORTED ALL AROUND ALEY. DITTO WITH TRIPOLI, WHERE THERE HAS BEEN NO LETUP. MAJDALAYA, ZGHORTA, AND KOURA ARE SCENES OF BIGGEST CONFRONTATIONS.

7. ON POLITICAL FRONT, ABOVE-MENTIONED MILITARY AIRCRAFT ATTACK NEAR DAMOUR HAS CANCELLED BETS ON LIKELIHOOD OF FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING, AT LEAST UNTIL SITUATION CLARIFIES. EVEN APART FROM THAT ATTACK, SIGNS BEGAN TO EMERGE LATE JAN 15 THAT FRANGIE HAD ADOPTED POSITION THAT EFFECTIVE START TOWARD CEASEFIRE MUST OCCUR BEFORE HE WOULD JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS, AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TASK GIVEN PHALANGE STRANGLEHOLD ON TEL ZAATAR AND SHARPENING PALESTINIAN-ARMY CONFRONTATION. (COMMENT: THIS "CEASEFIRE FIRST CONCESSIONS LATER" FORMULA IS FAMILIAR CHRISTIAN POSITION. IN CURRENT DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION, HOWEVER, MODERATE LEADERS ON BOTH SIDES SEE FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING AS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO WARRANT CAREFUL PREPARATION

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AND MODICUM OF STABILITY DFR OEHAND. THIS WAS APPARENTLY AGREED ALSO IN FRANGIE-ASAD PHONE CONVERSATION JAN 15, WHICH FAILED SET FIRM DATE FOR SUMMIT AND PROMPTED ASAD DECISION SEND HIKMAT CHIHABI TO BEIRUT KTO ASSIST KARAME'S RENEWED CEASEFIRE EFFORTS. WE UNDERSTAND CHIHABI ARRIVED MIDDAY JAN 16. THUS, NEW FRANGIE LINE NOT NECESSARILY DESIGNED UNDERCUT SUMMIT, ALTHOUGH IT PUT DATE IN CONSIDERABLE DOUBT. POTENTIALLY MORE DAMAGING TO SUMMIT IDEA IS ESCALATION YMBOLIZED BY JAN 16 MILITARY AIRCRAFT ATTACK.)

8. FRANGIE'S MEETINGS JAN 15 WITH GREEK ORTHODOX AND GREEK CATHOLIC LEADERS RESULTED IN CONFIRMATION OF CHRISTIAN POSITION THAT LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP MUST BE SETTLED ABOVE ALL ELSE. SEPARATE PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE TWO COMMUNITIES AFTER MEETINGS REFLECTED THIS VIEW-

POINT, ALTHOUGH ONLY THE GREEK CATHOLIC STATEMENT EXPLICITLY ECHOED EARLIER MARONITE POSITION (BEIRUT 0442) THAT PALESTINIANS ARE CAUSE OF LEBANON'S PROBLEM. GREEK ORTHODOX STATEMENT WAS SIGNIFICANTLY Milder IN TONE, MENTIONING NEED FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS.

9. ONE SPECIFIC FEATURE OF CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM POLITICAL BARGAINING, I.E. QUESTION OF CONFESSIONAL SPLIT IN PARLIAMENT, SURFACED BRIEFLY IN PRESS JAN 16. ABDALLAH YAFI IS REPORTED TO HAVE CONVEYED TO SYRIANS DECISION OF MOSLEM LEADERS TO REJECT ELEVEN TO TEN FORMULA IN FAVOR OF CHRISTIANS. THIS RATIO HAD BEEN PROPOSED RECENTLY AS COM-PROMISE FIGURE (BEIRUT 0178). WE ARE TOLD THAT BOTH THE GREEK ORTHODOX AND GREEK CATHOLIC LEADERS IN JAN 15 MEETINGS LEANKED HEKAVILY TOWARD ELEVEN TO TEN FORMULA BUT EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS MOSLEM PREFERENCE FOR FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT. MOSLEMS APPEAR FIRMER THAN CHRISTIANS ON THIS POINT AT PRESENT TIME.

10. AS RESULT OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT ATTACK, BEIRUT AIRPORT CLOSED TO INCOMING FLIGHTS FOR REST OF JAN 16. AT LEAST. MEA FLIGHT 233 TO ATHENS EARLY AXTERNOON WAS LAST OUTGOING FLIGHT, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL FURTHER FLIGHTS WILL TAKE OFF UNTIL TOMORROW, JAN 17. ARMY ADVISES US REGULAR ESCORT FOR EMBASSY PERSONNEL TO AND FROM AIRPORT WILL NOT BE PROVIDED THIS AFTERNOON, DUE TO PRESENCE NUMEROUS ARMED MEN ON AIRPORT
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ROAD. AIRATT NOW OUT AT AIRPORT AND PLANS SPEND NIGHT THERE.
LAMBRAKIS

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Message Attributes

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